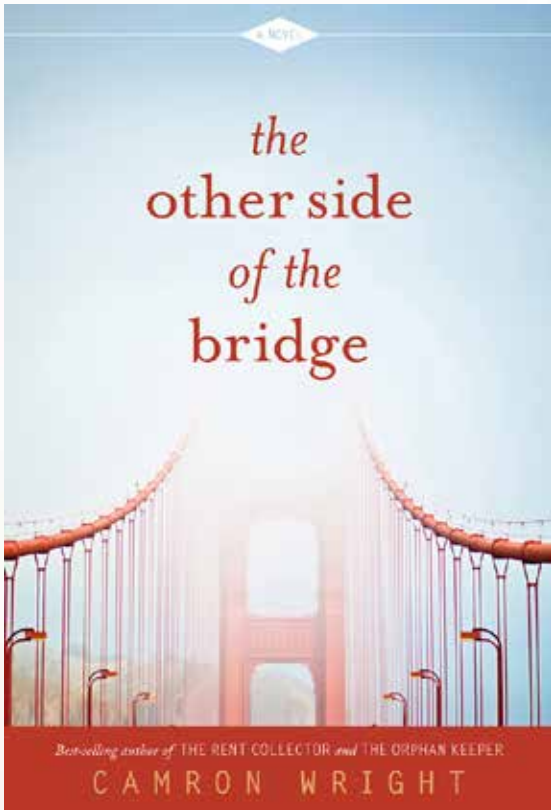


Reading Guide



1. In Emily Dickinson's opening poem (the book's epigraph), she describes faith as a bridge without piers or supports. Is that a fair description of how many in the world view faith? At the same time she calls it *bold* and having *Arms of Steel* that *join behind the Veil*. What do you think she is implying with this phrase? What parallels may one draw between the concept of faith and hope in the poem and then in the story?

2. In reminiscing about her father's death on the bridge, Katie wonders what part fate played. Do you believe that accidents are fate, that they are meant to happen, or are they, as their name implies, simply *accidents*?

3. In one of Dave's visits with Dr. Jaspers, his grief counselor, she tells him to "...be careful about chasing dreams that are only wispy puffs of hope not based in reality." Is this wise advice? Have you ever chased a dream and wished you hadn't? Likewise, have you ever chosen to not chase a dream

but later wished you had? How can we know if our dreams and desires are worthy of chasing?

4. Redd shares an experience with Dave that he had at the Vietnam Memorial where he heard the voice of Leslie Harris, his friend who was killed in the war. Have you (or someone you know) ever had an experience where you saw, heard or felt the presence of someone who had passed? If so, how did it impact your life? Researchers in a University of Milan study suggest the phenomenon is common, reporting a "very high prevalence" of what they call "post-bereavement hallucinatory experiences." Are these experiences simply a way people deal with grief or do they represent something more?



- 5.** Katie enjoyed creating “people watching games.” Have you ever done the same? Have you ever caught someone watching you in a people watching game?
- 6.** Were you disappointed that while Dave and Katie met on the bridge, neither realized there was a deeper connection between them? Do you believe these types of encounters happen often in our lives? How would we know?
- 7.** There appear to be endless quotes posted on social media about bridges—building bridges, crossing bridges, burning bridges, etc. What is it about bridges that makes them so prevalent as metaphors in our lives?
- 8.** Early in the story Katie ponders the roll of chance, particularly something as trivial as the timing of a sneeze and its potential to dramatically alter the course of one’s life. Is her worry valid? Did Katie’s sneeze near Dave at the bridge happen by chance? Should we worry about the timing of sneezes in our own lives (for either good or bad)?
- 9.** The reality of Dave’s ride across the bridge played out differently than his vision. Instead of the day being warm, sunny, and uplifting, it was dark, rainy, and emotionally draining, an experience that easily could have ended in tragedy. Have you been in a similar situation, where reality dashed your expectations? In the end, after some time had passed, did everything work out for you?
- 10.** When Glen, Jared and Gracie brought Dave home, their mother, Crystal, was horrified—and perhaps rightly so. If a smelly, long haired biker came to your door to use the phone, would you let him in? Where should you draw the line between kindness and caution? When you see a tattooed biker with a ponytail and a leather jacket, what is your first impression? If you could wave the person down and chat for a few minutes, do you think your impression might change?
- 11.** Did you know much about the building of the Golden Gate Bridge before reading this book? What did you learn that surprised you?

